

## Naval War College Review

---

Volume 41  
Number 1 *Winter*

Article 15

---

1988

# The 1988 Defense Budget

John A. Walgreen

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review>

---

### Recommended Citation

Walgreen, John A. (1988) "The 1988 Defense Budget," *Naval War College Review*: Vol. 41 : No. 1 , Article 15.  
Available at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review/vol41/iss1/15>

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at U.S. Naval War College Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Naval War College Review by an authorized editor of U.S. Naval War College Digital Commons. For more information, please contact [repository.inquiries@usnwc.edu](mailto:repository.inquiries@usnwc.edu).

tions that the Administration is dedicated to arms control. They clearly describe the increasing complexity of attaining arms control objectives, a result of the continuing build-up of defensive systems, which remains a nonnegotiable part of the discussions. Here again questions of technological feasibility seem to have been eclipsed by economic and political considerations.

Stephen Cimbala contributes the final chapter on the "Reagan Strategic Offensive Modernization Program." He develops some interesting dichotomies in the simultaneous modernization of the strategic offensive forces and the introduction of the Strategic Defense Initiative. He touches on the idea of "escalation dominance," the credibility and controllability of the limited nuclear option and on the concept of "launch on warning." He comments that even if the U.S.S.R. were to spend itself into bankruptcy, it would not necessarily provide for a more stable international environment. Cimbala does not comment on a bankrupt U.S. position.

In summary, *The Reagan Defense Program* is useful if topical reading. Whether it can be called an assessment is doubtful as few assessment criteria are presented. To paraphrase the 1980 campaign—has the U.S. national security posture been improved or decreased as a result of the high expenditures made and promised for the future? The book does not answer, except in a peripheral manner. But there is much material for the serious student to ponder and

much to argue about if one introduces technical considerations and objective measures of effectiveness. Cimbala's book closes the gap between science and politics by offering practitioners of each discipline a glimpse into the other. Unfortunately, if accurate technical material exists, it is in the classified literature and of limited utility for purposes of the defense debate.

ALBERT M. BOTTOMS  
Fort Belvoir, Virginia

---

Epstein, Joshua M. *The 1988 Defense Budget*. Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1987. 57pp. \$8.95

Joshua Epstein, a research associate in the Brookings' Foreign Policy Studies program and author of the Brookings' study of the FY87 defense budget, has written a study of the proposed FY88 defense budget in which he holds to the arguments presented in his previous work. Drawing on the research of other analysts as well as his own previous studies, Epstein concludes that the defense budget could be reduced by over \$47 billion in budget authority in FY88-89 without adversely affecting the security of the United States. The budget cuts would be focused on the "investment accounts" (procurement, research and development, and military construction) in both strategic nuclear and conventional forces.

Epstein would reduce spending on strategic nuclear programs by canceling the Midgetman missile and the

## 136 Naval War College Review

antisatellite program, freezing spending on the Strategic Defense Initiative at the FY86 level, reducing development spending on the stealth strategic bomber, and capping the MX missile at 50 units. His basis for these proposals is that the United States already has a more than adequate deterrent, especially in the Trident submarine. The programs that he would cut add significant cost but do little to enhance the strategic nuclear war deterrent.

Although the cuts in strategic programs would save about \$18.5 billion over the next two years, reductions in conventional forces would save even more—almost \$28.8 billion in budget authority in FY88-89. The Navy would bear a large part of the budget cuts because Epstein would reduce the number of carrier battle groups from the programmed 15 to 12, thereby eliminating funding for two new nuclear-powered carriers and reducing spending on carrier-based aircraft and other ships in the carrier battle groups.

The rationale for the 600-ship, 15-carrier navy is said to be The Maritime Strategy which calls for the U.S. Navy to attack the Soviet Navy in its home ports. However, Epstein argues that to carry out such high-risk missions with even a moderate expectation of success would require at least 21 carriers. He claims that it would be more cost-effective to destroy the Soviet Navy through a combination of land-based air force attacks and naval barrier defenses. Without the offensive maritime strategy, no more than 12 carrier battle groups would be

needed to defend the sea lines of communication.

Not all military affairs analysts reach Epstein's conclusion on the need for carriers. William V. Kennedy has argued for a 15-carrier navy and a modified maritime strategy (*Wall Street Journal*, 10 July 1987). Kennedy agrees with Epstein and other Brookings analysts that carrier-led attacks on the Russian naval base at Murmansk and operations in the Norwegian Sea would be suicide and cannot be the strategic basis for the 15-carrier, 600-ship navy. But, unlike Epstein, Kennedy believes that successful carrier and amphibious task force attacks could be carried out against the Soviet base at Petropavlovsk in the North Pacific. The threat to Soviet territory in the North Pacific might act as a deterrent to Soviet actions elsewhere and thus justify a 15-carrier battle group navy.

Epstein does favor some increases in naval spending on fast sea lift in place of more expensive airlift. Given this sea lift and the use of air power to block key passes in the Iranian mountains, he argues that Iranian oil fields could be defended against a Soviet invasion with two less Army light divisions than the Administration's budget calls for. He would convert these excess light divisions to armored brigades and shift them to NATO.

Epstein's analysis shows that a successful nonnuclear defense of NATO is possible. He indicates how this could be done, even with some reductions in certain NATO-oriented Army and Air Force programs. But

he also shows how NATO could not succeed if 100,000 U.S. troops were withdrawn as some have advocated. Interestingly, William Kennedy would favor the troop withdrawal to fund and man the 15-carrier navy.

Some hard choices lie ahead for U.S. defense planners. If increases in the defense budget continue to be less than the rate of inflation, as was the case in FY86 and FY87, then investment programs like shipbuilding may continue at the expense of operations and support funding needed to maintain personnel and readiness levels. Can we afford this? Epstein says no and provides his solution to the budget crunch. We may not like his conclusions, but we will be challenged to provide better ones. This study is worth reading in order to prepare for that challenge.

JOHN A. WALGREEN  
Wheaton College

---

Stubbing, Richard A. *The Defense Game*. New York: Harper & Row, 1986. 445pp. \$21.50

In the recent plethora of books by so-called defense reformers, there have been some useful ones, but this one definitely does not fit into that category. *The Defense Game* contains errors in fact, is oversimplified, and casts issues in a manner that creates false impressions.

For instance: Stubbing claims that the military is overpaid and when he finishes with his pay gymnastics, the "typical" 0-3 is in the 44 percent tax bracket. Fact or fiction?

Another: he attempts to credit Secretary McNamara with the elimination of Atlas and Titan missiles (ICBMs) from the SAC inventory for financial reasons. This completely ignores the military's cognizance of differences between the operating efficiencies of solid and liquid-propelled missiles. The U.S. Air Force planned early on that Atlas and Titan I (liquids) were stopgap measures until Minuteman (solid) could be perfected.

Give Stubbing high marks for his "revelation" that the failure of the U.S. Air Force to pay adequate attention to the Close Air Support (CAS) mission has caused frustration for the Army and contributed to its higher cost alternatives. His solution grossly fails—he would transfer the CAS mission to the Army's control—overlooking the infrastructure of air fields, personnel, maintenance facilities, and other requirements that the Army lacks to perform this mission. Transfer of the mission would probably cause duplication of this infrastructure. He rightly damns the Army for its managing of DIVAD but fails to recognize that there is a valid need for an antiaircraft weapon to be deployed with ground troops. He considers aircraft carriers to be an infantile fixation of the Navy, without understanding their mission.

Stubbing's chapter on Caspar Weinberger is not only inaccurate but downright vicious and his comments misleading. He demands strong controls over the military, yet he decries micromanagement.

This reviewer has served in both the U.S. Air Force and the defense